

An Update on the Bullying Project

By Annette Hanson, Deena Sebell, and Wendy Bell

During the 2003-04 school year, the Massachusetts Department of Education provided grant funding to help districts focus on intervention programs at the early childhood level in the area of children's mental health. Shrewsbury was awarded grant money and the district's work focused on conflict resolution and how to deal with bullying behaviors. The overall goal is to create a school and community culture in which bullying behavior is not tolerated. A committee was formed with teachers, and other building specialists from the preschool, kindergarten and all elementary schools. Along with Lauren Mitsis, we represented Paton School. The Committee met every 4 to 6 weeks to research the topic, to plan programs, and consider how best to assist children in coping with conflict and bullying.

There was consensus that the responsive classroom approach used in each classroom in town allows teachers and students to practice strategies and discuss ways to deal with conflict, and focus on any bullying behavior that may be occurring. Paton School continues to use the responsive classroom in teaching and working through conflict resolution, teasing and bullying. Additional training was provided to Paton staff in November by a presenter from the Northeast Foundation for Children, developers of the responsive classroom approach. Some district staff members also attended summer responsive classroom training.

Jill Wensky, nurse at Beal, coordinated three parent programs last year that were provided by the Parents First organization. Additionally a storyteller provided an enrichment program at each school for students in grades K-3 last spring.

Committee members also reviewed media and parent/teacher resource collections in each school and made suggestions for titles to be added. Monies provided by the grant were used to purchase additional books as needed. Also, all classrooms received QUIT IT! A Teacher's Guide on Teasing and Bullying.

At Paton School, Ms. Sebell and our Media center has a nice collection of books on conflict resolution and bullying that teachers and parents can borrow to as needed. Some titles available include:

Benny Gets a Bully-Ache	J. Bomberger & R. Hall
The Berenstain Bears Get In a Fight	S. & J. Berenstain
The Berenstain Bears and the Trouble with Friends	S. & J. Berenstain
The Berenstain Bears and the Bully	S. & J. Berenstain
The Berenstain Bears and the In Crowd	S. & J. Berenstain
The Berenstain Bears and Too Much Teasing	S. & J. Berenstain
Bully on the Bus	C. W. Bosch
Don't Laugh at Me	S. Seskin & A. Shamblin
Enemy Pie	D. Munson
How Leo Learned to Be King	M. Pfister
How to be Cool in the Third Grade	B. Duffey
King of the Playground	P. R. Naylor
Martha Walks the Dog	S. Meddaugh
My Name is Not Dummy	E. Crary
My Secret Bully	T. Ludwig
Simon's Hook: A Story About Teases & Put-Downs	K. Burnett
Stop Picking on Me: A First Look at Bullying	P. Thomas

Telling Isn't Tattling
The Meanest Thing to Say
Too Smart for Bullies
The Way I Feel
No Ordinary Olive
Today I Feel Silly ...
I'm Gonna Like Me ...
What Are You So Grumpy About?
The Shark Who Learned a Lesson
My Many Colored Days
When Sophie Gets Angry ...
How Are You Peeling?
How Leo Learned to be King
The Brand New Kid
The English Roses

K. Hammerseng
B. Cosby & V. Honeywood
R. Kahn & S. Chandler
Janan Cain
Roberta Baker
Jamie Lee Curtis
Jamie Lee Curtis
Tom Lichtenheld
Gill McBurnet
Dr. Seuss
Molly Bang
Saxton Freyman & Joost Elfers
Marcus Pfister
Katie Couric
Madonna

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) has developed this excerpted information for parents about bullying:

- **Know what bullying looks like.** Most bullying is verbal ~ name calling, teasing, and purposefully leaving others out.
- **Bullies enjoy the power of bullying,** and blame their victims for their own actions.
- **Children “go along to get along,”** in other words, bystanders rarely intervene for fear of becoming the bully's next victim.
- **Victims often suffer in silence** because they feel that nothing can be done to help them.

NAESP makes these suggestions for parents to help their children to:

- **Be verbally assertive if teased.** For elementary children, just saying: “Stop that, I don't like it,” will often send the bully looking for a more easily intimidated victim.
- **Be a friend to others in need.** Encourage your child to look out for their friends, and to tell responsible adults if they know a child is being bullied.
- **Ignore bullies' provocations.** If they don't satisfy the bully by openly reacting, often the bully will not persist.
- **Never be a bully.** Talk with your son or daughter about your expectations for their behavior, and if they should show bullying behavior, seek some help to help them.
- **Feel good about themselves, and valued by you.** Children who do, and show self-esteem aren't as likely to become victims of bullies. Providing your child with genuine praise and unconditional love are keys.
- **Know that you are always available** to talk with them about problems such as bullying. Ask about it from time to time, and try to help them to understand the dangers of letting bullies “get away with it.”

Beal School has added a section about conflict resolution and bullying on their website, which is a terrific resource. It contains a list of links, and an extensive list of books for children, teachers, and families.

See www.shrewsbury-ma.gov/schools/district/bullying/home.html